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A TRADITIONAL BALLAD FROM THE KENTUCKY
MOUNTAINS¹

BY JOSIAH H. COMBS

SWEET WILLIAM

1. Sweet William he arose on last May morning,
He dressed himself in blue;
"Come and tell unto me that long, long love
Between Lydia Margaret and you."
2. "I know no harm of Lydia Margaret, my love,
And I hope she knows none of me.
By eight o'clock to-morrow morning
Lydia Margaret my new bride shall see."
3. Lydia Margaret was standing in her boughing-door,
A-combing back her hair.
Who you reckon she spy but Sweet William and his bride?
To the stone wall she drew nigh.
4. Lydia Margaret threw down her ivory comb,
And quickly she wrapped up her hair;
She went away to her own bedroom,
And there she sang so clear.
5. The day being past and the night a-coming on,
When they all were lying asleep,
Lydia Margaret she arose with her tears in her eyes
And stood at Sweet William's bed-feet.
6. "How do you like your blanket, sir?
'T is how do you like your sheet?
How do you like that fair lady
Lies in your arms asleep?"
7. "Very well I like my blanket;
Very well I like my sheet:
Much better I like the fair lady
A-talking at my bed-feet."
8. The night a-bein' past and the day a-comin' on,
When they all were lying awake,

¹ [This is a good version of "Fair Margaret and Sweet William" (Child, No. 74). It is similar to Child's version B, which was communicated to Percy by the Dean of Derry, but first printed by Child, II, 201. The ghost is replaced by Lady Margaret in person. — G. L. K.]

Sweet William arose with trouble in his breast
With the dreams that he dreamt last night.

9. "Such dreams, such dreams, such dreams," said he,
"Such dreams, I fear, ain't good:
I dreamed last night of young science¹ in my room;
My new bride's bed was blood."
10. Sweet William he called on his merry maids all,
By one, by two, by three;
Among them all he asked his bride
Lydia Margaret he might go see.
11. "Is Margaret in her boughing-door,
Or is she in her hall,
Or is she in the kitchen-room
Among the merry maids all?"
12. "She's neither in her boughing-door;
She's neither in her hall;
Tho' she is dead, in her own bed's made,
Made up 'gainst yonders wall."²
13. First he kissed her red rosy cheeks,
And then he kissed her chin,
And then he kissed her snowy-white breast,
But the breath always stayed in.
14. Lydia Margaret she died like it might a-been to-day;
Sweet William he dies to-morrow:
Lydia Margaret she died for pure love's sake;
Sweet William he died for sorrow.
15. Lydia Margaret was buried in the east of the church,³
Sweet William was buried in the west;
And out of Lydia Margaret's grave grows a red, red rose,
Spread over Sweet William's breast.

HINDMAN, KNOTT COUNTY,
KENTUCKY.

¹ [Child's A has "red swine;" B, "white swine;" C, "wild men's wine." — G. L. K.]

² Another version has "Laid out against the wall."

³ Another version has "the east churchyard."